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DEBATE CALLED POSSIBLE CAUSE

May Have Inflamed Suspect—Arab Unit Head

By MARY SCHURZ

NEW YORK (AP) — The secretary general of the Action Committee on American-Arab relations said Wednesday the man charged with shooting Sen. Robert F. Kennedy "may have been inflamed" by a statement made Saturday night during the Kennedy-McCarthy televised debate.

Dr. Mohammad T. Mehdi said that while Kennedy was discussing Vietnam he said America should support Israel in the conflict in the Middle East.

"It is this disrespect for the human Arab person which brings about this kind of violence," Mehdi said.

In the debate, Kennedy said at one point: "I do think that we have some commitments around the globe; I think we have a commitment to Israel, for instance, that has to be kept."

The man charged with the shooting was identified by Los Angeles police as Sirhan Bishara Sirhan, 24, a Jordanian from Jerusalem who recently has been living in Pasadena, Calif.

WAS STUDENT

Medi said Sirhan was a student at Pasadena State College and was active in the Organization of Arab Students at the college.

In a formal statement, Mehdi said:

"We do not condone Mr. Sirhan's act and we are indeed appalled. However, his behavior reflects the frustration of many Arabs with American politicians who have sold the Arab people of Palestine to the Zionist Jewish voters.

"We condemn the fact that Sen. Kennedy had kowtowed to the Zionist pressure to the detriment of American interest in the Middle East, as we condemn the act of Mr. Sirhan."

Mehdi also was critical of the position taken by Sen. Eugene McCarthy in the debate.

MAINTAIN STRENGTH

McCarthy, when asked about an earlier Kennedy proposal that the United States should send Israel 50 Phantom jets, replied that he felt "we had to maintain the military strength of Israel against the Arab nations."

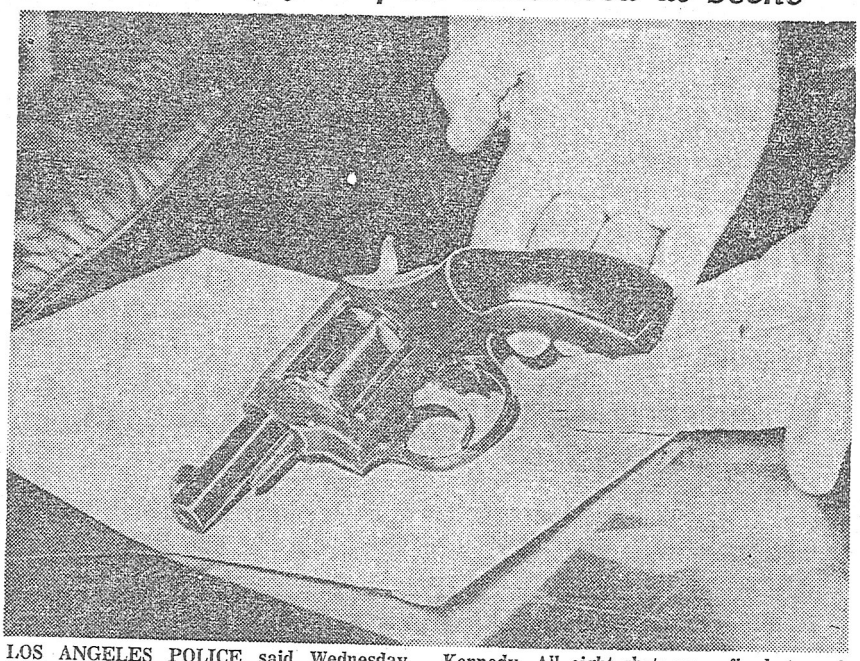
McCarthy added: "And I have said we had to at least help them rebuild the strength that they lost in the recent war, that means 50 jets."

Mehdi described his 4-year-old action committee as an "organization concerned with American policies in the Middle East."

"Our hope," he said, "is to bring about a total change in American policies, which heretofore have been pro-Israel and to the detriment of American interests. We hope to balance the Zionist pressures."

Mehdi said there are one million American Arabs, and that his organization has 10,000 members. The committee is based in Manhattan.

Gun Used by Suspect Recovered at Scene



LOS ANGELES POLICE said Wednesday that this eight-shot .22 pistol was taken from a suspect in the shooting of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy. All eight shots were fired, two of them lodging in Kennedy's head. Another grazed him on the forehead.